

South Main Street Historic District

Roughly South Main Street between Webster and Linden and Mulberry between Calhoun and Vance avenues

Memphis

The South Main Street Historic District in Memphis comprises a collection of predominantly commercial buildings and includes the Lorraine Hotel, a building of exceptional significance to African American history. Built around 1920, the Lorraine Hotel had been a typical South Main Street hotel for white travelers until 1942. By the end of World War II, it had become a black establishment, which had among its early guests Cab Calloway, Count Basie, and other prominent jazz musicians. It was later a stopping point for Roy Campanella, Nat "King" Cole, and Aretha Franklin. It was partly because of its significance to the black community of Memphis that Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., chose to stay at the Lorraine during the 1968 Memphis sanitation workers' strike. It was outside his second-floor room of the 1965 motel addition to the Lorraine that he was assassinated while helping to settle the strike.

For information on the life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., see Martin Luther King, Jr., National Historic Site, Fulton County, Georgia. [CAB 9/2/82, 82004054]